



Dear Middle School Principal:

Good news! This year, qualified 6th graders get the opportunity to become **Indiana Twenty-first Century Scholars**. The state of Indiana created the program in 1990 to eliminate the financial barrier to college and encourage students to:

- stay in school and out of trouble;
- work hard academically;
- graduate high school; and
- take the steps necessary to get to and through college.

Through this program, students in grades 6-8 who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, are U.S. citizens, and fulfill program requirements are **guaranteed the cost of up to four years of undergraduate college tuition assistance** at any participating public college or university in Indiana.

The Twenty-first Century Scholars program is getting results. In addition to helping more low-income students get to college, the program is proving to be one of the state's most successful dropout prevention strategies.

Until this school year, only students in 7th and 8th grades had the opportunity to become Scholars, and they were required to enroll in the program through an application process before they took the Scholars pledge. Through the efforts of schools, youth-serving organizations and the Scholars regional support programs, enrollment has increased every year. But despite these efforts, only about half of the students who could receive this free college tuition opportunity enroll each year.

Many tell us the application itself is a barrier to getting students signed up. **So with this year's new opportunity to enroll students in grade 6, we are piloting a new process: eliminating the application and going straight to the Take the Pledge step.** All 6th grade students at your school who receive free or reduced-price meals and also are U.S. citizens get to skip the traditional Scholars application and simply take the pledge to complete the Scholars enrollment process.\*

The expansion of the Twenty-first Century Scholars program to 6th graders is exciting. **We want to ensure 100 percent of eligible students take the pledge, but we can't do it without you.** As principal of a school that has 6th graders, you get the opportunity to bring the promise of a college education to kids in your building.

*continued*



*Your college and career connection!*



Here's how it works:

- We need you to schedule and conduct a Take the Pledge event for your school. Your school's event can happen any time that is convenient, but it needs to happen before the end of the school year.
- A toolkit with everything you need for your school's Take the Pledge event will be mailed to you Feb. 9-20.
- After your pledge event, we need you to return Scholars Pledge Certification forms to the state. Forms must be received by June 30, 2009.
- You will submit data to the Indiana Department of Education, via your end-of-year DOE-AD data submission, on which of your eligible students took the Scholars pledge.
- This is a new approach that is being piloted only with 6th graders. We will want your feedback on how it worked at your school. After your event, please provide feedback and additional ideas on how this effort can be improved by going to [www.learnmoreindiana.org/feedback](http://www.learnmoreindiana.org/feedback).



Please watch for your toolkit in February. Thank you for reaching out to your students to help ensure they get the Twenty-first Century Scholars promise of a college education.

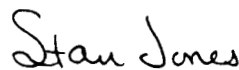
Sincerely,



**Seana Murphy**  
Director  
Twenty-first Century  
Scholars



**Dr. Tony Bennett**  
Superintendent  
of Public Instruction  
State of Indiana



**Stan Jones**  
Commissioner  
Indiana Commission for  
Higher Education

*\* Schools that operate the National School Lunch Program/School Breakfast Program under what is known as Provision 2 or Provision 3 are not permitted to use this streamlined 6th grade enrollment process because individual student eligibility for free or reduced-price meals is not established annually. These schools must use the traditional Twenty-first Century Scholars application process for enrolling students. (Provision 2 and 3 schools should not have received this toolkit.)*



Your college and career connection!

